

The Sherrod's sued USDA, alleging racial discrimination and were awarded a settlement for wrongful dispossession of New Communities; they used the money to purchase Cypress Pond Plantation, an antebellum plantation now managed by descendants of slaves, to help rural Black landowners profit from farming and to be a model for solving the nation's affordable housing shortage (Quiros, 2022). "From marching in the Albany Movement, being beaten and jailed, registering rural folks to vote, serving in local politics, and founding New Communities," wrote Professor Ansley L. Quiros in a piece published by the Washington Post, "Sherrod stayed with the course of freedom and the beloved community until his death" (2022).

Rev. Charles M. Sherrod accomplished much in his life, but none would be possible without the grace of God and the love and support of his wife, Shirley; his two children, Russia and Kenyatta; his 5 grandchildren, and other family and loved ones who will miss him dearly.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues in the House of Representatives join my wife, Vivian and me, along with the 730,000 people of the 2nd Congressional District of Georgia in honoring the life and legacy of Rev. Charles Melvin Sherrod and in extending our deepest condolences to his family, friends and all who mourn his loss. May they be consoled and comforted by an abiding faith and the Holy Spirit in the days, weeks and months ahead.

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 13, 2022]

A VITAL CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST YOU NEVER  
HEARD OF HAS DIED

(By Ansley L. Quiros)

Charles Melvin Sherrod died on Tuesday at the age of 85 in Albany, Ga., a place he went to in 1961 and never left. If you are not from southwest Georgia, his name might not be familiar. But Charles Sherrod is the most important civil rights figure you've never heard of. Recovering his story offers us a chance not only to honor a civil rights hero, but also to better understand the struggle for freedom to which he committed himself for so long.

Sherrod was born on Jan. 2, 1937, in Surry, Va., a place he described as a "speck." He never knew his father and was raised primarily by his grandmother within a broad community of friends and cousins. Even as a young child, Sherrod possessed a deep faith in God and a precocious theological imagination. Probably inspired by the sermons he heard at Mount Olive Baptist Church, he would often play church, preaching to other children and soon sensing a real call to the ministry. "I was preaching when I was about 6 years old," Sherrod told me, adding, "I was born a preacher." He would carry that preacher's zeal and deep moral vision with him for the rest of his life.

Despite the racism and suffocating poverty he experienced in childhood, Sherrod excelled in school. He attended the all-Black Peabody High School where he played sports, acted in plays and served as student body president and school chaplain. Sherrod then attended Virginia Union University where he earned his undergraduate degree in sociology, and then an M.A. in theology, fulfilling his ambition to become a minister.

During this time, Sherrod's Christian commitments first led him to challenge the dehumanization of Jim Crow. He participated in a "kneel-in" at a segregated church in 1954 and later joined a picket in front of Thalheimer's department store. "I saw the [lynching] rope in my mind," he confessed,

but he also felt a sense of responsibility since people were "coming to me, asking me for leadership."

Sherrod was a natural leader: smart and calm with a ready, broad smile.

In April 1960, his civil rights activities took Sherrod to a meeting at Shaw University, where the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded. SNCC's vision—nonviolence, collective action and the pursuit of a beloved community in which all people are afforded dignity, respect and care—appealed to Sherrod's calling, both to Christianity and racial justice. After the meeting, Sherrod told Ella Baker, the veteran activist who was then the executive secretary for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference who convened the students, that "I'd be willing to be placed anywhere." She sent him to southwest Georgia, a place W.E.B. Du Bois had once called the "Egypt of the Confederacy," where he would spend the next six decades working for freedom.

Sherrod arrived in Albany as SNCC's first field secretary, "full of zeal and empty of almost everything else." But soon, he and the men and women of Albany launched a full-scale assault on Jim Crow unlike anything that had been seen before. The Albany Movement, as it became known, was a dramatic mobilization of people against racial violence and segregation.

In traditional accounts of the civil rights movement, Albany is depicted as a failure, a place where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was outmaneuvered by Police Chief Laurie Pritchett, who unlike so many other Southern lawmen, avoided the spectacle of publicly attacking protesters, and simply locked them up. This is why Sherrod's story is crucial. The Albany Movement was only a failure when considered from the perspective of King. The movement continued after King left, making important, if slow, gains. "Nothing could stop the people," Sherrod said, "certainly not jail or the threat of jail, not [even] death."

Sherrod stayed, organizing in the rural counties, though he did take a "Movement sabbatical" in 1964, heading to Union Theological Seminary in New York. He earned a Master's of Divinity and then returned to southwest Georgia, bringing White seminarians with him as part of an exchange program called the Student Interracial Ministry. For Sherrod, this was a continuation of his civil rights work. He insisted, always, that the end was not simply political but moral: a society where Black and White Americans, all created in the image of God, could live and work together in unity and peace.

In 1966, this philosophy led to a breach with SNCC, which was moving away from interracialism and Christian nonviolence and toward a more militant stance of Black Power. As Sherrod put it: "I didn't leave SNCC, SNCC left me." But he stayed with the work of racial justice—voter registration and community organizing—under the auspices of the Southwest Georgia Freedom Project.

In the late 1960s, Sherrod, along with his wife, Shirley Miller Sherrod, a Baker County native whom he married in 1966, helped found New Communities, a farming collective that was, at one point, the largest Black-owned plot of land in the United States. For decades, New Communities was the fulfillment of a dream for the Sherrods, a place where they could work the land and care for others.

But in the 1980s, when a devastating drought afflicted southwest Georgia, they were repeatedly denied relief and the farm was foreclosed on. In asking for a loan, Sherrod heard from White loan officials the same message he'd heard from segregation-

ists decades earlier when trying to vote: "Over my dead body."

Though devastated by the loss of New Communities, the Sherrods kept working faithfully in southwest Georgia. Charles Sherrod had been elected to the Albany City Council in 1976, a post he held until 1990, and also served as a prison chaplain, while Shirley worked for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives before being named the U.S. Department of Agriculture Georgia Director of Rural Development in 2009. Shirley was fired after conservative blogger Andrew Breitbart posted selectively edited, misleading video clips from a speech she gave. The White House and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack apologized to Sherrod two days after her firing.

After seeing her name dragged through the mud, Shirley got better news. She heard about a class-action lawsuit, *Pigford v. Glickman II*, alleging systemic racial discrimination toward Black farmers by the USDA. The Sherrods filed a claim and were awarded a settlement for the wrongful dispossession of New Communities. They used the money to purchase a new farm. It was a bittersweet moment.

And one that reveals how long the Black freedom struggle has been. Charles Sherrod embodied this enduring struggle over the long haul, in all of its breadth and character. From marching in the Albany Movement, being beaten and jailed in Americus, Ga., registering rural folks to vote, founding New Communities, to serving in local politics, Sherrod stayed with the cause of freedom and beloved community until his death.

His story reminds us that the work of racial justice is ongoing, that it occurs in rural spaces as well as urban ones and that it can look like political organizing, preaching, farming or just the ordinary miracle of Black love in America.

## CONGRATULATING THE LADY FALCONS ON THEIR STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2022

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Blair Oaks Lady Falcons on their victory in the Class 3 Girls Volleyball State Championship.

The Lady Falcons had a stellar season, with a 33–3–1 record. The Lady Falcons should be commended for all their hard work throughout the past year and for bringing home the state championship to their school and community.

Please join me in recognizing The Lady Falcons for a job well done.

## RECOGNIZING HOWARD BUFFETT

HON. RODNEY DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2022

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize my friend from Decatur, Illinois, Howard Buffett, and his foundation, The Howard G. Buffett Foundation, for their work to rebuild communities and the agriculture sector in Ukraine in light of Russia's invasion of the country.